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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR CORFU OSCE MINISTERIAL

Classified By: CDA KYLE SCOTT. REASONS 1.5 (B) (D).

¶1. (C) Your decision to attend this first-of-its-kind informal OSCE Ministerial in Corfu is a strong signal of your commitment to reinvigorate the OSCE. It marks a return to high-level American engagement at the OSCE after a four-year absence by the U.S. Secretary of State from ministerial-level meetings. European countries have taken note and appreciate the renewed engagement on European issues they have seen from the new Administration. Your attendance at Corfu will send a strong signal of our continuing commitment to keep European affairs high on our national agenda.

¶2. (C) Your Greek hosts, and FM Bakoyannis in particular, view your attendance as a hopeful sign for the success of this meeting. In fact, other than ensuring broad high-level participation in the meeting, Greece's goals for Corfu are extremely modest. They see a risk that the NATO-Russia Council session immediately prior to the OSCE meeting will set the political tone for the broader OSCE discussions to follow, so will want a good NRC as well. The Chairmanship seeks no concrete outcomes -- but does hope to gain credit for launching "The Corfu Process" of dialogue on European security. For Greece, it seems, the meeting is the message.

OSCE: Barometer of Relations with Moscow

¶3. (C) Your goal of reinvigorating the OSCE remains a challenge. The OSCE has always been a barometer of relations with Moscow, and in recent years it has been in the crosshairs of Russia's increasingly assertive foreign policy. Russia's frustration with its declining influence in European affairs has been magnified by waves of NATO and EU enlargement, the abandonment of the ABM Treaty and subsequent development of new missile defense plans on European soil, the stalemate in progress toward an adapted CFE agreement on conventional arms control, NATO's refusal to engage on Russia's other proposals for confidence-building measures, Western actions in Kosovo, and increasingly close NATO, EU, and bilateral relations with Russia's immediate neighbors.

¶4. (C) When ODIHR monitoring confirmed reports of election fraud in Ukraine and Georgia, helping to spark color revolutions along Russia's immediate borders, Moscow's resentments boiled over. Russia has ratcheted up efforts to curtail OSCE autonomy ever since. We spent several years beating back Moscow's efforts to "reform" the OSCE -- a transparent effort to hamstring the Organization and limit its freedom of action. Moscow suspended its participation in the CFE agreement 18 months ago. While holding the key to resolving the protracted conflicts, Moscow passively or actively resisted efforts to reach a settlement. Russia uses its veto over budgetary decisions to stunt necessary growth for ODIHR and OSCE Missions in the former Soviet Union, and consistently opposes efforts to apply OSCE resources to the growing tensions in Georgia. Sadly, the OSCE's military monitoring operation along the South Ossetian conflict line will conduct its final patrol just as ministers gather in Corfu, while the all-encompassing OSCE Mission to Georgia will cease operations at the end of the month -- in both cases at Russia's insistence alone.

What Does Russia Really Want?

15. (C) Renewed OSCE engagement on Moscow's security concerns could play a role in "pressing the reset button" with Moscow, although the new spirit this Administration has brought to Russian affairs has so far not resulted in any noticeable change to Russia's belligerent approach in the OSCE. Russia's antipathy to the OSCE's comprehensive security approach is evident in Medvedev's ideas on a new model for discussion of security in Europe -- one that focuses only on "hard" security, and that calls for bringing in all players and organizations under one big tent rather than concentrating efforts in the OSCE. Your Greek hosts hope Corfu will establish the OSCE as center stage for any overarching security dialogue.

16. (C) Medvedev's appeal for a treaty-based system remains vague and ill-defined. Many delegations hope FM Lavrov's appearance at the OSCE's Annual Security Review Conference immediately prior to the Trieste G-8 meeting will provide greater detail, but there are no indications he will offer anything more substantial than the generalities we have heard to date. For many of our European partners, Russia's ideas sound unworkable, and even smack of hypocrisy in light of Russia's August war with Georgia, which openly violated key principles and OSCE commitments on sovereignty, non-use of force, and host-country consent for the stationing of foreign troops.

17. (C) They suspect Russia's real goal is to foment disagreement among the nations of the West, and eventually undermine NATO solidarity, while seeking a Russian veto over NATO or EU strategic steps, particularly further expansion. A more charitable view is that Russia would eventually be satisfied with a bigger voice in decision-making on security in Europe -- something they believe has been denied them in the last decade. A healthy dose of skepticism is prudent: from what we have heard thus far, Russia seems to have more grudges than goals, and is using this process to air its insecurities, drive wedges between trans-Atlantic allies, and justify its aggression in Georgia. In order for the process initiated at Corfu to have content, the burden should be on Russia to demonstrate that it really seeks an agreed outcome.

What Others Want

18. (C) Russia's view of the security challenges in Europe is completely different from that of most of the rest of the OSCE:

-- Moscow focuses on NATO and EU encroachment on their immediate neighborhood, but the rest of Europe considers these steps benign or beneficial for security in Europe.

-- Moscow worries about our missile defense system; some in Europe may be ready to abandon the project, but Europeans still cast a wary eye at the missile capabilities being developed in Iran and North Korea.

-- Russia seeks to downplay the importance of human rights, while we and our EU partners worry about the slow reversal of the gains of the 1990's in the post-Soviet space.

-- Moscow wants to keep the focus on hard security, while Europeans are most concerned about the possible impact on their lives of terrorism, energy security and climate change.

-- Russia seeks progress toward an "Adapted Adapted-CFE," while we and our allies worry about Moscow's abandonment of the CFE treaty in force right now.

-- Russia sees 21st century threats of WMD, terrorism, extremism, cyber-crime and narcotics trafficking as marginal issues in the expected European security dialogue; our allies see them as the looming threats that must play a central role in discussions.

19. (C) For many of Russia's neighbors, the biggest security

concern is -- Russia. Its aggression in Georgia, energy policies meant to monopolize transit corridors, and manipulation of ethnic politics and other instabilities in the post-Soviet space as it seeks to carve out spheres of influence are seen as threats to their security and prosperity.

¶10. (C) With the European security perceptions of most of the OSCE and Russia apparently co-existing in parallel universes, our partners and allies are eager to engage in this dialogue -- mainly just to placate Russia. The West is generally satisfied with the current institutions that govern security in Europe, and there are few ideas for positive action. Europeans are ready to listen to Russia's ideas, but join us in the view that security in Europe should remain based on existing institutions and principles, and that the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security, including human rights and economic prosperity as well as political-military security, must be preserved.

What We Can Accomplish in Corfu

¶11. (C) The Greeks have designed Corfu to maximize informal exchanges. It will kick off with a mixer (including spouses), followed by a dinner restricted to delegation heads. That dinner will set the stage for the next day's discussions. We can expect FM Lavrov to lay out Russia's views early, and your Greek hosts hope you will use the dinner to review our key goals as well. You will find many listeners receptive to American leadership along these lines:

1) Demonstrating a readiness to engage in long-term dialogue anchored in the OSCE and based on a comprehensive concept of security that embraces economic, environmental, and human rights concerns as well as "hard security" issues.

2) Pressing the need for confidence-building steps by Russia to give impetus to the dialogue, underscoring in particular the importance of getting CFE back on track, addressing the protracted conflicts more effectively, and finding a way forward on Georgia.

3) Challenging Russia to turn away from the zero-sum bogey-man of NATO/EU enlargement and instead toward the broader security challenges facing Europe: terrorism, radicalization, WMD, missile proliferation, economic dislocation, energy security, environmental degradation, trafficking in persons and drugs, regional conflicts, and spillover impacts from Afghanistan or other unstable regions bordering on the OSCE region; and

4) Seeking to reinvigorate the OSCE as an effective tool -- not just for dialogue, but for practical results.

¶12. (C) In the end, expectations for an outcome at Corfu are low. We do not anticipate major breakthroughs, nor an effort to draft an agreed final communique or manifesto. Greece would like to get commitment to a more substantial agreement by the OSCE Ministerial meeting in Athens December 1-2, but we would be wise to remain cautious, allowing the discussions to dictate the pace of any final product rather than setting an artificial deadline or pre-ordained outcome. Even so, expanding the areas of agreement on the issues that are at stake in European security would still be an important take-away. Your Greek hosts will want to control how this is presented publicly, and I believe they will see much synergy between their desire to launch the "Corfu Process" and our own goal of establishing an agenda for dialogue. Whether Russia will play along is uncertain, however. If they do, Corfu could well set the stage for a much more intense and active discussion on these issues in the fall leading up to the Athens Ministerial.

¶13. (C) In addition to the OSCE's approach supporting our human rights and democracy agenda, one of its greatest assets is its broad geographic membership. On the margins, I am

sure you will also be able to take advantage of the Corfu gathering to establish contacts with counterparts you may have less contact with in other fora.

Scott